

light was on, so she thought he must be dressing or still resting. So she went to the chapel. After seven or eight minutes he had not come out and neither the secretaries was up either so she decided she must do something she'd never done before. She went and knocked on the door. Getting no answer she went on in and saw him in bed, wearing his glasses, papers in his hand his head bowed slightly forward. She told me she went toward him and said, 'But, you Holiness, you shouldn't play this joke on me. Then she realized that something was terribly wrong and she got frightened and rushed back to the sisters. After that they went and got the secretary, Father Magee.'

"So it was Sister Vincenza, definitely, who found the body?"

"She found him dead, but she said the priests decided to announce that the secretary found him because they were worried about the stories that went round about Madre Pasquelina and Pope Pius XII." Night, pp. 214-215. Emphasis supplied.

"... Secretary of State Villot ordered the removal of every personal item belonging to the pontiff, including his glasses, his slippers, and above all the medicines on his night table." Holy Father, p. 152. Emphasis supplied.

SUENENS: What about the rumors?

VILLOT: What rumors?

SUENENS: That his body was not discovered at five thirty by Magee, but at four thirty by a nun.

GANTIN: And that he died reading secret papers.

VILLOT: I can't be responsible for rumors . . .

LORSCHIEDER: Responsible newspapers are carrying the story.

VILLOT: These are lies by people trying to discredit the Vatican.

BAGGIO: Probably the communists.

BENELLI: Is Sister Vicenza a communist?

VILLOT: Vincenza is in Venice.

BENELLI: I spoke to her (TO VILLOT) Before you sent her away. (To the others) She discovered the Pope's body a little after four thirty. He was holding papers he had been working on all afternoon.

OTTAVIANI: Impossible . . . Villot what is going on?

VILLOT: (Looking around) How could I say that a nun discovered the Pope's body?

OTTAVIANI: (Shocked) So you lied to the press?

VILLOT: Yes.

GANTIN: And the story about what he was reading, was that a lie?

VILLOT: (Looking at BENELLI then speaking reluctantly) Yes.

OTTAVIANI: How could you do this?

BAGGIO: If we tell the truth now it will only be worse.

BENELLI: You can't hide the truth.

BAGGIO: Why not?

BENELLI: I won't hide the truth.

LORSCHIEDER: The newspapers are already saying that he might have been murdered.

OTTAVIANI: (Looking at VILLOT) You are a fool.

BAGGIO: We can issue a correction and say it was a mistake.

OTTAVIANI gives BAGGIO a look of disdain.

OTTAVIANI: (To BAGGIO) You are the mistake

BENELLI: (Slight pause) We need an autopsy.

VILLOT: The body has been embalmed.

BENELLI: I sent the embalmers away.

VILLOT: I sent them back. The body was embalmed last night.

BENELLI: Last night!

BAGGIO: (Loudly) There will not be an autopsy.

GANTIN: Why not?

BAGGIO: There is no precedent.

SUENENS: Cardinal Felici, you are the expert.

FELICI: I don't know.

OTTAVIANI: If we have lied about the time, about the papers, people will think we have lied about the cause of death.

FELICI: There will always be rumors.

OTTAVINI: (Heated) Rumors about murder?

VILLOT: (Trying to switch topics) We need to set a date for his funeral.

BENELLI: (Not playing that game) What happened to his things? His personal effects, his papers?

VILLOT: I had them removed. His watch, glasses, pictures, that sort of thing were sent to his family.

BENELLI: And his papers?

VILLOT: (Trying to switch topics) We need to set a date for his funeral.

BENELLI: (Not playing that game) What happened to his things? His personal effects, his papers?

VILLOT: I had them removed. His watch, glasses, pictures, that sort of thing were sent to his family.

BENELLI: And his papers?

VILLOT: They were confidential. They were destroyed.

GANTIN: Why?

VILLOT: I am Secretary of State. It was my decision.

BENELLI: What about his pills

VILLOT: Pills?

BENELLI: His pills, the coffee he drank that night, the tray of sweets he kept on his desk?

VILLOT: I gave instructions to remove everything.

BENELLI: They were thrown out?

VILLOT: Yes.

BENELLI: Then we will do an autopsy.

FELICI: An autopsy is ugly.

BENELLI: So is the possibility of murder.

BAGGIO: (Abruptly) There will not be an autopsy.

Everyone looks at BAGGIO because of the force of his comment.

BAGGIO (Trying to come up with a reason) How will we look, the Church look? It will only confirm people's suspicions and they will never believe the results anyway.

OTTAVIANI: I agree with Benelli.

FELICI: (Sarcastically) That the Pope was murdered?

OTTAVIANI: That we should have an autopsy to prove he wasn't.

FELICI (Trying to avoid an autopsy) What we need is an informal investigation to see if there is any need for an autopsy. A very quiet inquiry.

OTTAVIANI: Let's carve the poor bastard up, prove he wasn't murdered and be done with it.

VILLOT: I don't know . . .

FELICI: (Interrupting) As head of the Supreme Court, I will conduct the investigation

OTTAVIANI: No. As Senior Cardinal I will head the investigation.

FELICI: I will assist.

BENELLI: And so will I. We will need Lorenzi.

VILLOT: I sent him north. I don't think . . .

BENELLI: We will need to speak to him and Monsignor Magee

Sources: "This lead some monsignors in the Curia to whisper that the sheet of papers found in Lucianis' hand dealt with appointments and transfers – notes for reshaping the balance of power within the church. Pope John Paul I's notes were never published. In keeping with the usual practice, Secretary of State Villot ordered the removal of every personal item belonging to the Pontiff, including his glasses, his slippers, and above all the medicines on his night table." His Holiness, pp. 151-52, emphasis supplied.

"Villot decrees that the world must be told a story which departs from the truth in several places."

"Vincenza's involvement is to remain secret. She and the other household nuns are to be returned as soon as possible to the mother house of their order, where they are to remain, away from any public contact, for the rest of their lives."

"The official Vatican version will be that Magee, waiting to escort the pope to early-morning mass, discovered him dead in bed. And, says Villot, indicating the document chastising Arrupe, no mention must be made of it. The world will be told that Gianpaolo died reading *Imitation of Christ*. Villot explains the astonishing camouflage is to avoid 'unfortunate misunderstandings.'"

"Next Buzzonetti makes his contribution. He says he cannot straighten the body. Villot orders that Armando Zega and Company be contacted. Martin uses his bedside telephone to call the firm of morticians."

“At ten minutes past six the Zega employee known as the Technician arrives with an assistant. The Technician carries a small suitcase. He opens it and the others are amazed to see it contains several lengths of rope.”

“The Technician explains what he and his colleague must do.”

“Then do it,” orders Villot.”

“The morticians take up positions either side of the bed. The Technician knots a rope around Gianpaolo’s ankles and another across his knees. He and his assistant grasp the ends of the ropes. The Technician nods and they pull steadily. Gianpaolo’s knees unbend. The men tie the ropes to the bed frame. They place a different rope around the pope’s chest and pull it taut to straighten the trunk. Each man then takes an arm, straightening it by physical force so it rests at the side of the body. Each limb is now held in place by rope. The restraining cords will stay until rigor mortis has passed and the body is pliable once more. The men move to the head, one firmly grasping it while the other slowly manipulates the jaw to a normal position. They cover the body with a bed sheet, tucking it neatly into the side of the mattress, leaving only the head exposed. They close its eyes and mouth. Gianpaolo appears to be sleeping peacefully.”

“Magee escorts the men from the room and arranges for their return next morning to embalm the body.”

“The secretary will not be here to meet them. He is about to find himself caught up in a staggering twist to the drama of the death of a pope who has ruled for only thirty-three days. It will involve the KGB, the Soviet intelligence agency, and the chilling charge that Gianpaolo was murdered by poison.”

“It’s Saturday morning, September 30, and Franz Konig's mood matches the Roman weather: heavy. He's reeling from what he has just learned. That is why he's closely watching each of his fellow cardinals as they drift into the Sala Bologna. He keeps wondering which of them might have swallowed the carefully prepared and cunningly dangled bait. Even now, as he sits here in his purple-silk mourning robe, well inside the Vatican, Konig is sure the sophistry is still working its deadly effect far beyond the Leonine Walls. Reporters are clearly devouring it: Konig thinks grimly that this is to be expected. The material is so temptingly prepared it's a gift horse for sensation seekers.”

“But members of the press are not the only ones deceived. Some of the radical voices in the Vatican can be heard in the corridors and courtyards saying that for the first time in history, there should be an autopsy performed on a pope: that Gianpaolo's body should be opened and his organs removed for laboratory analysis to see if he has been poisoned. The very idea makes Konig shiver.”

“If it was only members of the Curia who were suggesting the postmortem, that would be quite bad enough. But a meeting of the Sacred College of Cardinals, the first of this interregnum, is about to begin in this salon to consider whether there should be an autopsy to try to quell all the rumors. This is what Konig finds especially disturbing. This is why he continues to watch the other cardinals for signs any of them has

swallowed the simulacrum and will be pushing for an autopsy-so falling into the trap which has been prepared by the Soviet organization above all others that Konig hates and despises, Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, the KGB."

"Konig is one of the few cardinals in the room who have seen at first hand the machinations of the KGB, and everything he has learned confirms this is one of their operations. He is certain he recognizes the agency's *modus operandi*; the footprints, invisible though they may be to others, in his mind lead all the way from Rome to Moscow, to the building in Dzerzhinsky Square where the KGB shares its headquarters with the infamous Lubianka. Very possibly the importance of the operation means it was cleared, perhaps is even being directed by, the agency's chairman, General Yuri Andropov."

"Konig knows how efficient the general can be: over the years Andropov has done his share of besmirching the Church. And just forty-eight hours ago, when Konig was in Helsinki on "Church business," he had heard of yet another KGB drive being prepared against the Church behind the Iron Curtain."

"But even that pales against this-a full-scale plot to destabilize the entire Church through the smear that the pope was murdered by his trusted aides. The very concept of the plot is so staggering that even now, with the evidence of its success so far only too clear, Konig cannot quite believe the KGB hopes to get away with it. But it has-and it is. If it hadn't, there would not be this meeting. There would not have happened so many of the things which have since Konig heard Gianpaolo was dead."

"His secretary woke him in his Helsinki hotel with the news. Even a strong mind like Konig's can absorb only so much. He simply refused to believe, hoping against hope, refusing to think the unthinkable, clinging to the thought that there had been a mistake. Then it hit with a force which made him physically gasp: a promising pontificate was cruelly over and the Church was again vulnerable until a new choice is installed. He had sat on his bed and prayed. By the time he was being driven to the airport, Konig was again his composed self. As the taxi pulled into the terminal, he heard the Finnish radio announce there were reports the pope had been poisoned by "persons unknown." That was the beginning. By the time he reached Vienna-staying only long enough to pack for conclave-Konig's staff was fending off newsmen following wire-service reports from Rome on the same theme. That was when his suspicions hardened. But only when Konig reached Rome and discovered that people inside the Vatican were suggesting that an autopsy would "prove" the pope died of natural causes did he become certain that what was happening bore the hallmark of the KGB."

"That was yesterday."

"Today he knows the plot has a firmer grip than he could ever have thought possible. The very credibility of the Church, the Vatican and the papacy is being eroded. It is truly frightening."



"Looking around the Sala Bologna, Konig wonders what support he can expect for his plan to stop the KGB's machinations."

"He has been one of the first to arrive and occupies the same seat he had during the last interregnum, when the Sacred College met here every morning to settle important Church matters. The salon is just as grandly impersonal as he remembers it: the frescoes and the fine art collection almost casually hanging on the walls of this high-ceilinged room do nothing to hide the fact that the Sala Bologna is almost never used except on such momentous occasions as interregnums."

"The long table at which Konig sits is standard multinational-boardroom length; the chairs might have come from any conference supplier. Konig wonders whether the drinking water in the glass jugs placed at regular intervals on the table has been changed since last he was here."

"Most of the cardinals are in shock so severe that they sit in numbed silence waiting for the meeting to start. Konig is positive none of them anticipated Gianpaolo's death. That is what makes the evil campaign so horrific."

"Konig is even sure he knows which station of the KGB spawned it: it bears the malevolent mark of Department D - for *dezinformatsiya* - of the First Chief Directorate. Only Department D can move so swiftly, be so well organized, calling upon its vast experience in the area of grand deceptions designed to mislead, confuse or influence world opinion against the Church. What has occurred reeks of the opportunism which has in the past seen other Department D provocations grow to monstrous proportions. The Vatican has been thrown into panic."

"The KGB success and the attendant repercussions both stem largely from decisions taken by Villot. Konig and the other cardinals who see the specter of Department D-they include Joseph Ratzinger of Munich, Joseph Hoffner of Cologne, Giuseppe Siri of Genoa and the Poles, Stefan Wyseynski of Warsaw and Karol Wojtyla of Cracow-find it virtually impossible to make sense of the camerlengo's behavior. They feel that from the moment Villot invented the nonsense about Magee finding Gianpaolo in bed reading *Imitation of Christ*, the camerlengo has played into the hands of Department D. This criticism is both carefully restrained and further muted by compassion. The years had taken their toll on Villot even before he assumed the intense pressures of the last interregnum and conclave. And, if only because of his close contact with the pope, the shock of Gianpaolo's sudden death has been all that much more traumatic for him. It has left his decision-making process fatally flawed."

"This may account for the strained, almost haunted look about the camerlengo. Seated at one end of the table, Villot appears a very old man who realizes he has lost his grip on events, but cannot quite understand how. And even Konig, despite his certainty that the KGB is behind the plot, finds it hard to provide satisfactory answers to all aspects of the calumny."



“For whatever reason - whether he is in fact recoiling in shock, whether there is something close to hysteria behind the tightly controlled mask of a face - Villot has not been his normally careful and farseeing self since he made the first extraordinary decisions in the pope's bedroom.”

“To attempt to hide that Gianpaolo was reading the indictment of the Jesuits is understandable; the pope's death effectively puts into limbo the crisis with the Society of Jesus.”

“But to try to excise the presence of Vincenza from the timetable of Gianpaolo's death and place discovery on Magee borders on the irrational.”

“In any event, shortly after Villot made these decisions, a sequence of happenings occurred which, within a matter of hours, torpedoed whatever thinking might have induced him to attempt such fabrications in the first place.”

“This much is known:”

“Around 7 A.M. on Friday-when word is officially given by Vatican Radio that Gianpaolo is dead-Franco Antico receives the first of many calls he will accept and make during the rest of that day.”

“Antico is the secretary general of Civiltà Cristiana, the aggressively right-wing organization which plastered Rome during August with posters demanding: “ELECT A CATHOLIC POPE.” It supports Lefebvre, opposes many of the changes introduced by Vatican II. More important for what is to follow, Civiltà Cristiana believed Gianpaolo to be “a good man” bent on a project dear to its own heart: reforming the Curia, which the organization identifies as the enemy of Lefebvre's traditionalism. The international media briefly spotlighted Civiltà Cristiana during the last interregnum. But since then it has virtually dropped out of sight. Membership is beginning to fall from a claimed peak of fifty thousand in forty-one countries. Civiltà Cristiana badly needs something to get it back to those heady days when *Time* and other news magazines gave it space and the contributions came rolling in.”

“To the journalists who interviewed him in August, Antico seemed someone who would have been a success with the Medici popes. He is a romantic and trustingly naive. He also sees conspiracies where most people don't. Antico is very responsive to what the press likes to hear: he's the sort of man some journalists simply can't do without. These qualities are about to have a disastrous effect when he takes that first early-morning call.”

“With the stubbornness which is another of his traits, Antico will go to his grave refusing to name his caller. He will merely contend he is “a person with good Vatican connections.” In the scenario which now develops, all the cardinals who insist this is a KGB plot determinedly cast Antico's caller in the role of agent provocateur for Department D. Later Casaroli, Martin, Magee and Noe, people not usually given to wild words, will also insist the man is a KGB agent.”

“Antico is shocked by what his caller tells him.”

“By the end of their conversation-Antico thinks it may have lasted twenty minutes-he has a very clear picture of what must be done. With his penchant for conspiracies, the secretary general has not needed much convincing that, in the name of Civiltà Cristiana, he should immediately call for an autopsy, and that the reason for doing so is to establish whether the pope was murdered ‘by persons unknown.’”

“Since 1959, when Department D was formed, it has achieved its most conspicuous successes by distributing its fabrications through a gullible medium most unlikely to be thought associated with Soviet duplicity. The devoutly Catholic Antico perfectly fits the department’s requirements.”

“Who his caller is must remain a matter of speculation. KGB disinformation operations have always differed from conventional Soviet propaganda insofar as extraordinary care is taken to conceal the true originating source. In this case, as Konig accurately perceives, the plan has been well laid, suggesting that careful fieldwork established the pipeline to Antico. Almost certainly there are several cutout points between Department D officers and the person who actually telephoned Antico. In the event of a subterfuge going wrong at any stage, tracing it back to the KGB would be a near-impossibility. Perhaps it is as Konig says, a matter of recognizing the footprints.”

“In this case the fuse has been laid but remains to be lit.”

“It is the Vatican Press Office which applies the match. About the time Antico is having his momentous conversation, Father Romeo Panciroli clears with Villot the official announcement of Gianpaolo’s death: ‘This morning at about 5:30 A.M., the private secretary of the pope, Father John Magee, entered the bedroom of Pope John Paul I. Not having found him in his chapel as usual, he was looking for him in his room and found him dead in bed with the lights on as if he were reading.’”

“At seven-thirty on Friday morning, Panciroli telephones this statement to major foreign and Italian news agencies in Rome.”

“About thirty minutes later, Ansa, an Italian wire service, receives a call from Antico. He reads out a statement which states categorically that Vincenza found the pope and that she ‘clashed down the corridor’ to awaken Magee. Gianpaolo had ‘a few sheets of paper in his hand,’ which Antico identifies as ‘highly secret documents.’”

“The Ansa reporter’s excitement is understandable. In almost every respect Antico’s version contradicts the Vatican’s.”

“Shortly after eight o’clock Ansa begins to transmit Antico’s staggering demand for an autopsy to ascertain whether the pope has been poisoned.”

“By then other correspondents in Rome are being called by Antico with the same astounding tale.”

“Few, if any, stop to ask basic questions. What is the nature of the evidence? Has it been handed over to the Italian police? Are there sworn statements and witnesses? No such

challenges are offered. It is simply enough that Antico is an official of an organization which was taken seriously in August. His utterances are now accepted at face value again.”

“The reporters begin to call Panciroli. He is still bruised from his abrasive encounters with the media during the previous interregnum and conclave, and reacts badly: he is cooler than usual. It makes him no new media friends; the reporters accuse him of covering up. Panciroli calls Villot. The camerlengo orders the press secretary to put up the shutters. The suspicion of conspiracy gains strength.”

“Nobody will know whether Villot stops to think how it is that the perfectly accurate account of Vincenza’s involvement has emerged so quickly.”

“By midmorning on Friday, Antico and Civiltà Cristiana are firmly back in the spotlight. He is taking media calls from all over Europe. If the reporters suspect the real status of his imposing-sounding organization - a small, fading institution that clings to the hem of Lefebvre’s cassock - it does not trouble them. As the press has built up the archbishop, so it now endows Civiltà Cristiana with a significance it does not deserve. Perhaps then it is inevitable that Antico, with his heady blend of romance and suspicion, should soon be claiming, “We have concrete evidence to back our demands for an investigation. But we can’t release it at this time. We want to preserve the legal niceties and work through channels.””

“He helpfully suggests that the reporters call Vincenza and Magee.”

“Faced with Panciroli’s freezing refusal to comment, journalists try to reach the nun and the secretary.”

“They are too late. On Villot’s orders, three hours after she found Gianpaolo, Vincenza and her nuns were bundled out of the Vatican and driven away into the Church’s equivalent of purdah. When the Vatican switchboard contacts Magee and says reporters wish to speak to him, the secretary prudently calls Villot first. Magee is stunned by the camerlengo’s reaction. Villot instructs him to pack at once, leave the Vatican for a seminary well outside Rome, and to stay there until further notice. The bewildered Magee follows the nuns into exile.”

“It does not take long before Antico is calling the press with this latest news. The reporters check. The Vatican Press Office says Magee has ‘left the country,’ and that the nuns are ‘inaccessible.’”

“So the conspiracy theory has grown to the point where the Sacred College is having this Saturday-morning meeting.”

“Of all the many questions which deeply trouble König as he sits in the Sala Bologna, one in particular predominates: how was Antico’s caller so well informed so quickly? Accepting he was a Soviet agent provocateur, an even more shattering question remains to be answered: Is there somewhere within the Vatican a KGB mole?”

"It is unthinkable. But as Konig knows too well, this is the era of the unthinkable."

"Felici is the last to enter the Sala Bologna. For the past month he has been virtually at Gianpaolo's elbow, every kilo of his bulky frame fostering his appearance of being the confident confidant. Now Felici seems to have physically crumbled: his huge head and neck look too large for his body."

"Benelli also appears to have shrunk. His eyes are hollow, his cheeks caved in: he seems a man who has recently done a great deal of crying."

"Nobody doubts both Felici and Benelli will recover; it's not in their nature to do otherwise. But for the moment their world has collapsed."

"It is difficult to gauge the mood of Siri of Genoa. Behind his horn-rimmed spectacles he is more inscrutable than ever. Perhaps he is mulling over what his sources in the Italian intelligence service have told him about the KGB's operation. Or maybe he feels like someone who has been given a secret chance at the papacy-which, at the age of seventy-two, Siri must surely expect to be his last tilt. It may also be that his twenty-five years as a cardinal has taught him to maintain an expressionless face on such uncertain occasions as this."

"Beside Siri sits Salvatore Pappalardo. He seems to be concentrating solely on his writing block; one has been set before each cardinal for any notes he cares to make. Pappalardo arrived on an early-morning flight from Palermo and is still mildly perplexed over having been buttonholed by Baggio about the need to resist any move to conduct an autopsy. This was the first that Pappalardo had heard of the proposal. He finds the suggestion repugnant. Not only does it fly in the face of precedent, a postmortem will cause further offense to all those Italians who disliked the idea of Paul's being embalmed."

"There are thirty-four cardinals in the salon when Villot, at precisely eleven o'clock, starts the meeting. The remainder of the Sacred College have yet to reach Rome."

"Carefully eyeing Felici, Villot first asks those present if they have each received their letter, signed by him, requesting that they take part in conclave. Villot is not going to allow Felici the chance to attack him again for his lapse at the outset of the last conclave. Only after he gets an affirmative nod from each cardinal does Villot continue."

"He repeats, almost word for word, the bald nonsense of the press statement he approved, adding that at the pope's bedside was a copy of *Imitation of Christ* and that Buzzonetti concluded death was from a massive heart attack which probably occurred around eleven o'clock the previous Thursday night."

"There are no questions."

"Villot proposes that the funeral should be in five days' time, Wednesday, October 4, the feast day of St. Francis, the patron of Italy."

"There are no objections."

“Everybody is waiting. The lengthening silence is broken from an unexpected quarter. Few can have expected the dean of the Sacred College to be the one to raise the subject. But Confalonieri says there is a need to decisively to end the malicious campaign that is now well under way. Distasteful as it may seem, it is nevertheless now necessary to have an autopsy. Oblivious to the reaction to this – there are a number of surprised gasps – he goes on to say the world must accept what everyone in this room most assuredly knows: that Gianpaolo has been peacefully called home; brief though it has been, his pontificate was not uneventful. Secure in that knowledge, it would be both sensible and desirable to take the only possible course to end this dastardly campaign of vilification. He will support any vote for a post-mortem.”

“Konig waits while the others consider what they have heard. He is himself as astonished as any at the line Confalonieri has taken. The dean’s view will, undoubtedly, have a powerful effect on those who are still undecided. It will be all that much harder for Konig to win them over-let alone change the minds of those already committed to Confalonieri’s point of view. Not for a moment does Konig think the dean has been influenced by anything other than the highest of motives. Certainly there is no question of anybody in this room-let alone a KGB mole-being able to nobble Confalonieri. He has clearly come to his decision after the most careful consideration. The fact that Konig thinks Confalonieri is wrong in no way alters his respect for the cardinal.”

“Konig begins to speak, slowly measuring his words. There is the matter of a lack of precedent. So far as he knows, there has never been an autopsy on a pope. Therefore, would it not be best to wait for a vote of the full College to make the decision? Will not a postmortem fan the fires they all want to douse? Though the time left before the funeral is short, is it not better to reflect further and consult quietly among themselves over the weekend? Surely this is too grave a decision to rush.”

“It is the familiar Konig technique, this posing of carefully enunciated questions. He moves on, calm and deliberate, confident of his argument.”

“There is the matter of secrecy. How could an autopsy be concealed? Outsiders would have to be involved. However trusted they were, there is no certainty there would not be a leak. And if there was an attempt at secrecy, and it was discovered, wouldn’t the damage be all the greater?”

“Further, assuming that prior notice is given, think how it could be exploited. Would it not be easy for the KGB to say it was no more than a cosmetic operation? Look at the outlandish lies they are already successfully spreading without any basis. Imagine, then, how much more effective their propaganda would be if they actually had something tangible to hang it on? And when the result is known, and the outcome is as irrefutable as they all know it must be. What then? Will the attacks cease? Assuredly not. More lies will follow. He finishes as he began, suggesting again that at the very minimum they should wait until the full College is assembled.”

“There is another silence. Villot waits to see whether anyone else will speak.”



“It is Felici who causes the second surprise. He argues that the presence of all the cardinals will not resolve the issue. There are likely to be just as firmly held opposing views then as there are now. Besides, it is possible some of the cardinals will not reach Rome until the day of the funeral. In view of the lying-in-state which is mandatory, it is impossible to wait until then. Nor, indeed, can the matter be delayed beyond Monday at the latest for ‘practical reasons.’”

“Felici has been speaking to the Technician, and he now knows a great deal about the bodily chemical changes which occur after death.”

“He proposes that three doctors externally examine the pope's body. Afterward they should prepare separate reports on the "medical advisability" of an autopsy. These ought to be available for the next meeting of the cardinals on Monday.”

“He suggests the names of a Rome pathologist and two physicians.”

“Villot pauses a moment and then asks for a vote.”

“Twenty-nine of the cardinals support Felici.” Pontiff, pp. 263-272. Emphasis supplied.

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OTTAVIANI: Dr. Buzzonetti, you are the director of the Vatican Health service.

BUZZONETTI: That is correct Your Eminence.

OTTAVIANI: (Smiling benignly at him) We would like to ask you a few questions about the morning you examined the body.

FELICI: Everything that is said here is completely confidential. Even the fact that we've had this meeting.

BUZZONETTI: I understand.

OTTAVIANI: You determined the cause of death.

BUZZONETTI: An acute myocardial infarction . . . that is heart failure. Your Eminence.

OTTAVIANI: (Nodding, and looking at a paper) And you estimated his death occurred at approximately p.m.?

BUZONETTI: Probably while his Holiness was still awake.

OTTAVIANI: Why do you say that?

BUZONETTI: The state of rigor of the body . . . also his glasses were still on the light by his bed was on.

OTTAVIANI: (Pause) I see . . .

FELICI: Was there any evidence of some other cause of death?

BUZZONETTI: Such as?

FELICI: Anything unusual?

BUZZONETTI: No.

OTTAVIANI: Did you see any evidence that the Pope had been murdered?

BUZZONETTI: Of course not.

OTTAVIANI: No, of course not.

BENELLI: (To the CONFESSOR) So simple, isn't it? (BENELLI moves towards the others)

OTTAVIANI: (He looks at FELICI) Thank you very much doctor.  
(BUZZONETTI starts to leave).

BENELLI: Before determining that the Pope died of a heart attack how often had you examined him?

BUZZONETTI: His doctor was Dr Da Ros in Venics. I had never examined him.

OTTAVIANI: Never?

BUZZONETTI: Not until he died.

BENELLI: Have you ever spoken to Dr Da Ros?

BUZZONETTI: Last week. He told the Pope was in excellent health.



OTTAVINI: He's dead.

BUZZONETTI: Before his death, he was in excellent health.

BENELLI: Did you speak to Dr Da Ros after he died?

BUZZONETTI: No.

BENELLI: Did you ask anyone if he had any symptoms, chest pains, shortness of breath?

BUZZONETTI: (Becoming uncomfortable.) No . . . I assume that if someone had noticed anything they would have told me.

OTTAVIANI: No one told you about any symptoms?

BUZZONETTI: That is correct.

BENELLI: Then doctor, what was the basis for your diagnosis?

BUZZONETTI: Of course of confident diagnosis can only be made after an autopsy and pathological examination.

BENELLI: I am aware of that. What was the basis for your diagnosis?

BUZZONETTI: (A pause) He died suddenly, while reading in his bed. His complexion was slightly pale. These facts are consistent with a heart attack.

BENELLI: I have spoken to a number of heart specialists. They tell that when people die of a heart attack, they are not found sitting up in bed with their glasses on. There is usually a tightness in the chest, often accompanied by severe pain along the left side. The Pope would have reacted to the pain. He would have made some effort to get help, to stay alive.

BUZZONETTI: (Reluctantly) Perhaps.

BENELLI: There were alarm buttons on either side of the Pope's bed, centimeters from his hands. Would a heart attack have prevented him from pushing one of the buttons?

BUZZONETTI: (Reluctantly) Not usually.

BENELLI: If, somehow, it did, wouldn't there still be some evidence of an attempt to reach them? (Pause) Did you see any evidence of such an effort?

BUZZONETTI: No.

BENELLI: So how can you say that the Pope died of a heart attack?

BUZZONETTI: I . . . He was the Pope. It must have been a heart attack.

BENELLI: Did you see any evidence of poison?

BUZZONETTI: (Shocked) No. Who would want to murder the Pope?

OTTAVIANI: No one. Are you finished Cardinal Benelli?

BENELLI: Yes. (BUZZONETTI exits)

OTTAVIANI: God help us if we're ever sick. (To FELICI) Where did we get him?

Sources: "The examination of the pope's physician Dr. Renato Buzzonetti, was thought by some to be slapdash, but it was used to draft a bulletin stating that John Paul I had died on the evening of September 28 of a heart attack (myocardial infraction). His Holiness, p. 152.

"Buzzonetti arrives. The doctor is ashen-faced and tieless. As he closes the bedroom door, Magee hears Lorenzi making another telephone call from Gianpaolo's study. He had placed Vincenza in there."

"Confalonieri arrives with Martin and Noé as Buzzonetti completes his medical examination. He turns from the bed and addresses the others. "A coronary occlusion. He felt nothing."

“When?” Villot’s question is flat and expressionless.”

“Buzzonetti clears his throat, thinking. ‘I estimate the time of death between ten-thirty and eleven o’clock last night.’”

“Villot bends down and opens his bag. When he straightens, he is holding the tiny silver hammer Magee last saw him produce in Paul’s bedroom at Castel Gandolfo.”

“Villot stands by the body and carefully removes Gianpaolo’s spectacles. He folds them and places them on the side table.”

“Then, just as he did with Paul, Villot taps the pope on his forehead with the hammer and solemnly inquires whether he is truly dead. When he has asked the question three times and received no reply, he informs those present, according to the rites of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, that Albino Luciani is dead.”

“He places the hammer in the bag, closes it and addresses Magee. ‘Bring in the nun.’”

“Magee fetches Vincenza.”

“She is dry-eyed and totally composed as she stands before Villot and recounts what she has seen and done. Villot thanks her and asks her to return to Lorenzi.”

“When Magee has once more closed the bedroom door, the camerlengo stands with his back to the Group and makes decisions that are going to have a devastating effect.”  
Pontiff, p. 262. Emphasis supplied.

“When did you last see the Pope?” I asked. “I mean, when the Pope was still alive.”

“I [Dr. Buzzonetti] can be very precise about that,” he replied promptly. “Neither myself, nor Professor Mario Fontana—who was head of the Vatican Health Service then, and who died in 1979—were ever called to give our professional services to Pope John I. I saw him at the end of the conclave. I was there as the deputy to Fontana. Then I think I saw him at a distance in the crowd at some function. Then I saw him dead. That’s all.”

“The doctor spoke rapidly, his head cocked, the lenses of his spectacles flashing in the light of the neon strips above him.”

“Were you aware of the Pope’s state of health, even in terms of a rumor?” I asked. “It was said after he died that he was in very poor health.”

“‘I wasn’t aware of it,’ he said without a pause. . . .”

“All the accounts say that the Pope was taking various medicines. Can you say what they were?”

“‘I really don’t know,’ he said bluntly. ‘I know nothing about his medicines.’ . . .”

“Can you at least tell me at what time you were called to the Vatican after the Pope was found dead?”

“Dr. Buzzonetti looked down at some prepared notes in front of him. ‘This I wrote down at the time,’ he said. ‘At five forty-two a.m. I was called at home on the morning of September twenty-ninth. I was, obviously, asleep in bed and the telephone woke me up. It was father John Magee, and he said: ‘The Pope is dead.’ . . .”

“‘After you entered the papal apartment,’ I said, ‘what happened then? Can you give me an account of the exact sequence of events through the rest of the morning as far as the Pope’s body was concerned?’”

“Buzzonetti took a sheet from the file in front of him in a swift, professional manner. ‘I recorded in note form everything I did and observed at the time, so I can say with more precision than others what happened that morning. These are my notes here. I tell you all this without violating the professional code of secrecy, because others saw these things together with me.’”

“He joined his hands together, elbows resting on either side of his notes. ‘When I entered the apartment, the Holy Father was in his bed. He was propped up, leaning forward slightly; his expression was composed and calm. He was wearing his glasses properly on his nose—that is, they hadn’t slipped off. His head was turned slightly to the right. In his hands he was holding some printed or typewritten sheets, like a pamphlet or booklet. The lamp above the headboard was on. I don’t know whether there were two or three cushions. With the blankets in the correct position. There was no gesture of agitation or untidiness.’ He was speaking with authority, in an almost snappy fashion.”

“After seven o’clock Monsignor Noè, the master of ceremonies, assisted by me, and helped by a religious of the Order of Saint John of God from the Vatican Pharmacy, and the secretaries, prepared and vested the body in the papal garments. Obviously it wasn’t something done in a few minutes.”

“‘Then the body was removed from the Clementina to the Sala dei Forconi, which is nearby. It’s known as the Hall of the Preachers. Here it was undressed again and the body was treated for hygienic preservation without the removal of organs, intestines or blood. The reason was to ensure as far as possible the feasibility of exposing the body to the faithful or some days, taking the climate and so on into consideration.’”

“‘Who was responsible for the preservation process?’ I asked. ‘Who was there?’”

“‘It was done by a team directed by Professor Gerin, Cesare Gerin, who at that time was director of the Istituto di Medicina Legale at the State University of Rome. He is an authoritative scientist of worldwide fame. He was assisted by his closest collaborators, amongst whom was Professor Fucci. Then there was Professor Mariggi and Professor Maragin. There was also a technical assistant in the person of one of the Signoraci brothers who also work at the istituto and who are very competent in this sort of operation. The treatment began at about seven in the evening of September twenty-ninth

and finished at about three-thirty on the morning of September thirtieth. Then the body was vested again after a few hours, and exposed once again.”

“Had rigor mortis set in to the Pope’s body; were there any parts of the body still warm when you found him?”

“‘I can’t tell you that because I’m bound by professional secrecy,’ he said abruptly.”

“‘I ask,’ I went on, ‘because there’s a dispute over the time of death. . . .’”

“‘I understand you diagnosed myocardial infarction,’ I said. “Was this an exact verdict, or necessarily rather vague?”

Buzzonetti looked at me stunned for a few moments, as if speechless at my impertinence.

He glanced for a moment at his companion and cocked his head. Finally he said in a cool voice, “The diagnosis wasn’t mine alone. There were two of us. I arrived first. Professor Fontana came at about eight o’clock. I gave him my opinion straightaway. He was entirely in agreement with the first bulletin, which was given not by me but by the secretary of state. Actually, I have now remembered that the preparation and undressing of the body began after eight o’clock. I remember now . . . Fontana then gave an order . . . I’d forgotten this, that the body should not be treated until at least nineteen or twenty hours had passed, in accordance with Italian law which insists that fifteen hours’ observation pass before a body can be touched.”

“But what of the diagnosis . . .” I began to say, to nudge him back on course.

“As for the method of diagnosis,” he said rapidly, “one does it employing the following elements . . . this is important: analysis, historical details, clinical history, remote and proximate. Secondly, with objective data. Thirdly, with circumstantial evidence: the bed, the position of the body, the aspect of the underwear, all the elements that give suggestions, ideas as to what happened. Then there are statistical considerations. Based on all these criteria, sudden death by heart attack was diagnosed.”

I found myself thinking that “clinical history, remote and proximate” would surely have included knowledge of his embolism in 1975, and information about his medicines.

“There is another point, which no one has pointed out: the diagnosis of sudden death. The adjective *SUDDEN* is not a journalistic description” —he managed a little smile at the word *journalistic*—“it is an exquisitely clinical diagnosis, and implies three fundamental concepts, as can be seen in all the textbooks: it is a natural death —sudden death is always natural; it is never not ‘proper,’ by definition; it is instantaneous or immediate, or premature, something like that. Thus, very little time is involved: in this case, instantaneous. And it is *unexpected*. These are the elements of a sudden death. All you have to do is look in any medical textbook.”

The important-sounding terminology flowed on: “A confident diagnosis can only be made by pathological examination. It should be said that in many cases of sudden death,

neither can the autopsy give a mathematical, anatomical proof of the cause of death in an absolute sense. So even the pathologist must form a hypothesis of this kind, putting various elements of the mosaic together in order to arrive at a concrete conclusion. Certainly in the hypothesis of a death which is not sudden, but violent, then there's another mechanism which would imply recourse to judicial processes, a problem which wasn't considered by anyone at that time. . . ."

"Dr. Buzzonetti, I understand that it's now being suggested that the cause of death might have been a pulmonary embolism, due to the fact that he'd had an embolism in the eye three years earlier."

"Anyone can come up with hypotheses of this or that, or embolisms," he said grandly, and dismissively. "There's Professor Dino a Catholic, who has been saying it, although he had never seen the Pope. . . ."

"Did you call Dr. Da Ros, the Pope's previous doctor, in the Veneto, at any time whatsoever? After the death?" I asked.

"He came either that evening or afternoon to Rome, I don't remember all that well. I met him, I think, in the Sala Clementina or outside. He embraced me, he said that he agreed with the diagnosis. We exchanged a few words, a greeting. He was upset, crying, you know. . . . It was a very short meeting. He said that in his view it was a heart attack but we didn't initiate a medical discussion."

So much, I was thinking, for the remote and proximate data. Apparently no discussion about John Paul's medication, about the swollen ankles, the pain in the chest the previous day, the thrombosis or embolism in 1975 . . .

"Don Diego Lorenzi now claims that the Pope had a pain in his chest on the day before he died," I said. "I found it puzzling. Why would the priest not tell the doctor of this pain? On the other hand, why did you not ask him if there had been any strange symptoms on the eve of the death?"

"I don't know why Don Diego didn't report the pain," he said, thrusting his head back. "They certainly never called me. As for my obligations in the matter, I've said that the diagnosis was made with recourse to the remote and proximate data. Thus the proximate data would include news of the hours or days before. What they were I am not going to say, but I accept that a doctor should ask. Any doctor would."

Did you feel at the time that an autopsy would have been a good option?" I asked.

"I honestly don't think so . . . I don't think so," he said emphatically.

"I know absolutely nothing of this," said Buzzonetti airily. "I kissed his hand the day he was elected Pope, while the conclave was still in force. He was greeting all the Vatican assistants. I kissed his hand, that's all. I saw him maybe once or twice from a distance, and then I went on holiday after the election. I hadn't had any vacation because of the

death of Paul VI, I only returned a few days before he died. So I don't know anything, and I can't say anything." Night, p. 218-226. Emphasis supplied.

LC89

BENELLI: Did you read what Baggio said to the press when asked about John Paul's death?

GANTIN: No.

BENELLI: The Lord uses us, but he does not need us. Now we will make another one.

"The Lord uses us but does not need us... Now we will need another one." IGN uses a similar phrase but different wording. A quote from Cardinal Baggio.

LC91

SUENENS: I spoke to Luciani the day he died. (BENELLI stops and looks at SUENENS) He told me about his meeting with Baggio. He also told me about his meeting with Villot and his decision on Marcinkus.

BENELLI: What happened ?

SUENENS: He was sending them home.

BENELLI: (*Smiling.*) That the truth is as hard to find in the Vatican as a good cup of coffee. He asked me to come back to Rome, to come back as Secretary of State. He was going to remove them all, Villot, Marcinkus, Baggio. He said it was to send people home.

Source: "Another widely disseminated pious lie was that the pope [John Paul] had been holding in his hand the rough draft of a homily he was preparing. But soon enough, word got out that the pope had been involved in a harsh discussion with his secretary of state [Cardinal Villot] about forthcoming



personnel changes in the curia and the Italian Church and that on the night of his death, he had phoned Cardinal Giovanni Colombo, archbishop of Milan to ask his advice.

This lead some monsignors in the Curia to whisper that the sheet of papers found in Lucianis' hand dealt with appointments and transfers – notes for reshaping the balance of power within the church. Pope John Paul I's notes were never published. In keeping with the usual practice, Secretary of State Villot ordered the removal of every personal item belonging to the Pontiff, including his glasses, his slippers, and above all the medicines on his night table." His Holiness, pp. 151-52, emphasis supplied.

LC92

NOTE: They are discussing Pope Paul.

BENELLI: What was his greatest achievement ?

VILLOT: His encyclical on birth control.

LC 93

BENELLI: Tell us about John Paul's feelings towards Paul's encyclical on birth control.

VILLOT: (pause) We would have convince him.

BENELLI: Of what ?

VILLOT: That Pope Paul was right.

BENELLI: How could you if you were no longer here ?

VILLOT: What do you mean ?

BENELLI: You were leaving Rome.

VILLOT: I had no intention of leaving Rome.

BENELLI: On September the twenty eight, the day the Pope died he told you that he was removing you as Secretary of State.

VILLOT: How dare you say that ?

BENELLI: I don't say it Cardinal Suenen does.

OTTAVIANI: Suenens

BENELLI: He spoke to John Paul right after the Pope's meeting with Cardinal Villot

OTTAVIANI: And who was to replace Cardinal Villot?

BENELLI: I was (Back to VILLOT) Do you deny it ?

VILLOT: (Looks at OTTAVIANI and then FELICI) I don't deny it.

Sources: "After the recommendation of the birth control commission had been rejected and it looked as though there could be an encyclical Luciani sent the report of his own small commission to the pope, arguing that now was not the proper time for a decision and that any action should be delayed until more study had been undertaken – which was very wise advice...

In both the above cases, his own personal opinion represented a change from the churches previous positions – certainly in birth control and probably divorce." Popes 1978, P. 171

"Now the rest is based on excellent sources inside the Vatican, I know for a fact that certain things happened the evening Pope Luciani died. He had it in mind to change things at the top of the Curia and make certain new appointments. He wanted to substitute Cardinal Villot with Cardinal Benelli. Consaroli would have gone to Milan, taking Cardinal Colombo's place. This sort of thing Popa Luciani talked with Villot about these plans on the last evening of his life and received a very straight reply. Villot told him it, would be a tremendous change from Paul VI's policies...' Night, p. 310.

LC 93

BENELLI: And later that evening you returned. You came to see the Pope one final time.

VILLOT: I saw the Pope frequently.

BENELLI: You had just been removed. Your returned to try to get the Pope to change his mind.

LC 94

VILLOT: He was going to destroy everything that Pope Paul accomplished.

BENELLI: And you failed.

VILLOT: He wouldn't listen.

BENELLI: And the paper were already drawn up. The papers removing you and others.

VILLOT: He had papers.

BENELLI: And that night he took them to bed with him.

VILLOT: He was going to remove the best people in Curia

BENELLI: He was Pope and you had to obey.

VILLOT: I did not have to obey.

BENELLI: As long as you live you had to obey. (pause) What happened that evening of September the twenty eight ? Was it the coffee ? Was it the sweets that he loved ? Was it the bottle of pills ?

VILLOT: There is no evidence that he was poisoned.

BENELLI: You destroyed the evidence.

VILLOT: No Pope is more important than the Church. The Curia has defeated greater Popes than John Paul.

VILLOT: I buried him in paper.

BENELLI: But he made decisions.

VILLOT: And we told him no.

BENELLI: Again and again you told him no.

VILLOT: Yes.

LC95

BENELLI: And day after day the piles of paper grew higher.

VILLOT: Yes.

BENELLI: For a year nothing has been decided. Now in one month you poured on is shoulders every problem you could find.

VILLOT: He was the Pope. He had to make decisions.

BENELLI: And when he made them you told him no.

VILLOT: He was wrong (BENELLI stares at him) I am the Secretary of State. It is my right to tell the Pope he is wrong.

BENELLI: It is the Pope's right to make the final decisions.

VILLOT: Error has no rights.

BENELLI: Are you saying the Pope was in error ?

VILLOT: Every word. Every action.

BENELLI: Who are you to judge the Pope ?

VILLOT: He wasn't a Pope. He was country priest that you pushed into the papacy. He was your Pope, not ours.

BENELLI: And this country priest had ideas of his own. Ideas he was willing to fight for.

VILLOT: He would have destroyed the Church.

BENELLI: Who made you the final arbiter ?

VILLOT: The Curia is the Church.

BENELLI: He would have changed the Curia.

VILLOT: I would have stopped him.

BENELLI: He removed you. There was only one way you could stop him.

LC96

VILLOT: I did not murder the Pope.

BENELLI: You drove him. You couldn't change him. So you isolated him and drove him.

VILLOT: (Stands up) Yes, I drove him. I drove him day and night.

BENELLI: He was in error. He was wrong.

VILLOT: He was in error.

BENELLI: He would have destroyed the Church.

VILLOT: Yes.

BENELLI: He had to die.

VILLOT: Yes.

BENELLI: He had to die for the Church.

VILLOT: Yes, I drove him – I worked him – I drove him until his body – until he died. Yes. God help me . . . I killed the Pope. (The room is silent.)

BENELLI: (Softly.) We all killed him.

Sources: "Error has no rights." Mr. Crane was educated a Catholic and is well aware of the phrase.

See also: "He [Luciani] had been taught by Cardinal Ottaviani in the Belluno seminary that 'error had no rights' and that consequently the toleration of Protestants was

impossible when Catholics were in the majority.” Three Popes, p. 95. Emphasis supplied.

It is interesting to compare this to the quote in IGN which was published five years after Three Popes.

“This was the generation which had taught Luciani in the Belluno seminary that religious ‘freedom’ was confined to Roman Catholics. ‘Error has no rights.’” IGN, p. 13.

“Villot’s miscalculation of the Pope’s administrative capacities, his poor state of health, was disastrous and surely culpable. Villot was at him day and night; John Paul tried to walk in the Vatican Gardens, he was dogged by security men and Villot would hurry out to meet him and ply him with yet more problems. Night and day Villot appeared, pressing him for answers and solutions, nagging and gooding. We shall never probably know the full extent of the administrative pressures he imposed on the new Pope; all we know for certain is that far from allowing him an easy introduction Villot . . . attempted to get rid Paul Vi’s backlog in the first few weeks.”

“Villot, it is widely reported, is in a state of enraged anguish in the morning of the death. If he is an accomplice in such a cover up, it is surely a measure of his own guilty feelings. It is said that he died believing he had ‘destroyed’ John Paul I.” Night, p. 325.

“As we progressed through the suburbs of Milan, he said ‘You know, Cardinal Villot told me he thought he had killed Papa Luciani. It is strange that Villot himself died mysteriously just six months later. I believe he died of a broken heart because he thought he had destroyed John Paul I.’”

“But how did he think he had killed him?” I asked.

Dom Diego nodded his head sadly. ‘I guess he thought he had overburdened him. You see, Villot was an old man himself. He’d had enough; he wanted to get out. So he thought he would clear the desks. He broke Luciani. It was all unnecessary. All that great mountain of paperwork. He could have done without it.” Night, p. 112, emphasis supplied.

LC 98

FELICI: Which is more important, justice for one dead man or the life of Christ’s Church. Let us assume are right. Let us assume someone murdered the Pope. It might have been someone outside the Church, but let us assume it is someone in the Church. Balance the harm your investigation will cause the Church against the benefit

of punishing one man or even a group of men. In the end god will judge.

BENELLI: What God chooses to do is his Business. Luciani's death is mine.

FELICI: You will establish nothing without an autopsy and for that you need a precedent.

BENELLI: There is a precedent.

FELICI: (Slowly nodding) Pius VIII . . yes, you can force an autopsy and the investigation. But what you really want is Villot, Marcinkus, myself and others out of Rome. You will not accomplish that with an autopsy. The only way you can is if you become Pope.

Sources: "They gather around Felici as he opens the *busta*. It contains the original diary of Prince Agostino Chigi, who had been marshal of conclave after Pius VIII's death.

Felici begins to read out Chigi's graphic account of the pope's frequent convulsions" before he died. He turns another yellowing page, his finger moving over the lines which Chigi's quill pen scratched onto the parchment paper.

And at last he finds out what he seeks. It is Chigi's detailed account of how an autopsy was secretly carried out on the pope the day following his death to establish whether he had been poisoned. The doctors who opened up Pius VIII found: "the organs healthy; the only thing noticed was some weakness in the lungs and some said his heart was weak."

Felici smiles triumphantly. He has his precedent." Pontiff, p. 279.

LC 105

GANTIN: In the last conclave we left feeling that we had been inspired by the Holy Spirit.

BENELLI: The Holy Spirit has been notably absent in this conclave.



Sources: “But we still have not come any closer towards explaining how it was that the virtually unknown Cardinal Luciani gained so sweeping and rapid a victory. And the well-attested near-unanimity in the final ballot (whether it was the third or the fourth) meant that almost any cardinal, or group of cardinals, could let it be known without breaking the secret that he or they had contributed to Cardinal Luciani’s success. The common conviction that the Holy Spirit had been at work was another way of saying that they were extremely satisfied with the outcome. Cardinal Suenens expressed this feeling most strikingly when he quoted the remark of one of the heroes of his youth. . . .

“(‘I no longer *believe* in the Holy Spirit—I have *seen* him’). Suenens applied this saying to the conclave.” Three Popes, pp. 78-79.